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SUBJECT: ACTION REQUEST: INTENSIFIED U.S.-EU EXPERT-LEVEL MEETINGS ON BIOFUELS SUSTAINABILITY

REF: USEU 1171

11. This is an action request for USEU Brussels.

OBJECTIVES

12. Department instructs Post to pursue the following action plan:

-- Work with European Commission (EC) expert-level contacts, EPA, DOE, USDA, and other USG agencies to schedule and conduct a bilateral Digital Videoconference (DVC) in late September on biofuels sustainability. The focus would be on the U.S. presenting the draft sustainability criteria currently being developed by the interagency Sustainability Working Group (SWG), and planned to be presented to the Biomass Research and Development Board in mid-September, and the EU presenting the latest developments in their work on sustainability criteria.

-- Please work to ensure that the next round of discussions involves a meaningful exchange. Work closely with appropriate USG agencies and the EC to develop a detailed agenda including specific agenda items, determining who will lead on each point for each side, and assigning lead on some points to the EC.

-- Following on the DVC, please work with appropriate USG agencies to develop and pursue appropriate follow-up in order to reach the interagency goal.

-- Our initial policy goal is to continue and strengthen the cooperative exchanges on sustainability criteria between experts on both sides, to ensure that biofuels sustainability criteria developed by the EU are grounded in science and compatible with U.S. criteria. Given that the Energy Independence and Security Act of 2007 (EISA) commits the USG to a similar examination, the ideal outcome would be compatible criteria for assessing biofuels sustainability on both sides of the Atlantic.

-- Our broad-gauge policy goal is to influence European Commission experts, as they develop sustainability criteria for biofuels, to rely on science; to work towards compatibility or at least general alignment with criteria, methodologies and work undertaken by the U.S.; and to incorporate additional scientific information as it emerges.

-- These efforts are distinct from, but complementary to and consistent with, our efforts in the Global Bio-Energy Partnership to work with the Europeans and others on voluntary criteria and methodologies for use in the conduct of lifecycle or well-to-tank/well-to-wheel greenhouse gas analysis of biofuels.

-- For your reference, the interagency community expects to seek an additional follow-up videoconference after the draft regulations for biofuels pursuant to EISA have been issued.

REPORTING DEADLINE AND POINTS OF CONTACT

13. Post should report results of effort by cable to EUR/ERA Matthew Beh (202 647 1820, behmk@state.gov) and OES/EGC Drew Nelson (202 736 7444, nelsonds@state.gov) before September 16, 2008. Please contact them by phone or email with any questions or requests for background information.

BACKGROUND AND GUIDANCE POINTS

14. Department expresses appreciation for Reftel as the summary of activity on this topic on the EU side. Please see forthcoming Septel for USG points for further engagement on this topic.

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